

June 2, 2015

Mr. Bryan Hartman
Program Manager
Bloomington Housing and Redevelopment Authority
1800 West Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington, MN 55431
Saint Paul, MN 55101

Dear Bryan:

HousingLink greatly values the partnership we have with Bloomington Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA). I am excited to share the successes of our work over the past year, and look forward to continuing our partnership. Bloomington HRA's general operating support helps HousingLink to develop unique expertise through consolidating complex data from multiple government and philanthropic entities to create an efficient, reliable source for affordable housing data in our community. In addition we know that thousands of households gain access to an affordable, safe rental home through our website each year, and general operating funds are critical to maintaining the housing search service.

HousingLink is actively engaged in listing both private-market and publicly funded rental unit waiting lists and vacancies. Since 2010 the rental vacancy rate has been less than 5% often times less than 3%, which results in a tight rental market making it hard for renters to find affordable rental housing as fewer units are available in existing rental housing. hList, our housing search tool, saw a 400% increase in housing searches in 2013, going from 113,029 searches in 2012 to 552,486 searches in 2013, and 623,085 in 2014. Clearly there is increased demand for access to reliable rental housing information. HousingLink is uniquely positioned to track the availability of housing and help connect renters to the most affordable units as soon as they are available. In this tight rental market we know Section 8 Voucher holders are having difficulty finding a rental home. Today over 40% of the listings on our website are willing to accept a Section 8 Voucher, we are pleased to be a go to source to aid these low-income renters in finding a new home.

Through Bloomington HRA's financial support we have successfully continued our services in the Twin Cities Metro Area. In 2014 there were over **21,388 unique vacancies for affordable rental housing advertised on HousingLink, and over ½ million searches for housing in the Twin Cities** were conducted on HousingLink. There were 58,303 searches that included Bloomington as a location in 2014. During this period **517 listings** were available in Bloomington, and of the 60 landlords in Bloomington who directly entered a listing via www.housinglink.org, 28% were willing to accept a Section 8 Voucher in the unit. In 2015 the number of searches continues to rise, with an average of **50,000** per month.

The need for affordable housing continues to outpace the supply, so providing access to accurate, timely information is critical to a low-income renter's chance at obtaining affordable rental housing. Through its support of HousingLink's general operations, Bloomington HRA will help thousands of

people access affordable rental housing options. Together we can lead families and individuals to affordable, safe, and stable places to live. This creates economic self-sufficiency in their lives.

The economic difficulties that households are experiencing have resulted in a high-demand year for HousingLink. We have increased our focus on educational materials, and ensuring accurate, timely vacancy listings in this tough rental market. Through the following work, HousingLink continues to be an excellent match for the Bloomington HRA's mission to provide housing for those who are not adequately served by the marketplace.

Searchers finding what they need through HousingLink

HousingLink's core services are provided through our website, and we continue to see unprecedented numbers of visits and searches on the website. In 2014 there were over **3 million** page views on the website.

2014 HousingLink Successes Impacting the Twin Cities

- 623,085 searches for housing in our community
- 21,388 listings available
- 77.2% of landlord entered listings willing to accept a voucher
- hAlert has sent 4.2 million alerts since February 2011
- 92,688 views of our Housing Authority Waiting List report
- 43,057 times the Section 8 voucher maps & information were accessed
- 52,701 visits for information about subsidized housing programs
- Renter Resources were viewed 11,168 times
- Over 20,000 views of educational video's
- 4,228 visits to access Fair Housing information

HousingLink Research and Housing Supply Data

HousingLink provides information on the supply and location of publicly-funded affordable housing through reports and a publically available online database called *Streams*. *Streams* (www.housinglink.org/streams) includes over 1,500 properties and 61,119 affordable units with public funding. *Streams* is used by researchers and community planners and policymakers involved in project planning. Our data and research capacity led us to produce the *Housing Measures* report for the McKnight Foundation. *Streams* data is updated annually to reflect the most current information.

We publish *Twin Cities Rental Revue*, a subscriber-based quarterly report that compares market rate shadow (rental houses, duplexes, condos, and townhomes) and apartment market rents for the seven county metro area. This report is turning into a successful earned income venture for HousingLink. We average 30 subscribers annually; mainly recurring subscriptions which help support our general operations.

HousingLink also reported on foreclosures in Minnesota. With 2,972 foreclosures in Minnesota, Q3 of 2013 becomes the first quarter falling short of the 3,000 mark since 2006. Although foreclosures leveled somewhat since the previous quarter (down 3 percent), the statewide total was down 33 percent from the same quarter last year. It is worth noting that, despite five consecutive quarters of decline, this quarter's foreclosure total is still roughly twice that of pre-crisis levels. You can see more on our research page at www.housinglink.org/research. After 6 years we have concluded our research on the foreclosures in Minnesota and have transitioned that work to the Minnesota HomeOwnership Center so they can monitor on an ongoing basis.

Looking Ahead

Bloomington HRA's general operating support helps maintain and advance our proven, effective, and growing services:

- Landlords willing to accept Section 8 Vouchers – HousingLink actively reaches out to owners and educates them on the benefits of working with this program.
- *Streams* – the comprehensive database of publicly funded rental housing in the Twin Cities which is crucial to the work of researchers, planners, and policy makers and the *Housing Counts* report.
- Housing search tool has over ½ million searches per year from low and moderate income renters and the service agencies who help them.
- *Twin Cities Rental Revue* -- A subscription based quarterly report that helps HousingLink generate earned income. This is an example of HousingLink leveraging McKnight's support to create services of value that also generate earned income.
- Rental Housing Education -- The Housing Resources, Fair Housing, and Housing Hub pages of our website provide education to renters, service agencies, and landlords. The amount of educational content (videos, tips, and more) we provide over the next two years will increase substantially. Education is a core part of our in-person outreach strategy. In 2013 we conducted over 88 trainings about subsidized housing, how to search for rental housing, and overcoming criminal, credit, and rental history barriers in a housing search. This intensive effort will continue over the next few years.

With the Bloomington HRA's support we can continue the above successes, while working on the following future initiatives:

- Mobile-Friendly website -- The number of people who accessed HousingLink's website via a mobile device doubled in the past year. In 2014 we implemented upgrades to our content

management system to ensure the website remains technologically relevant; in 2015 we will release a new mobile-friendly version of the website.

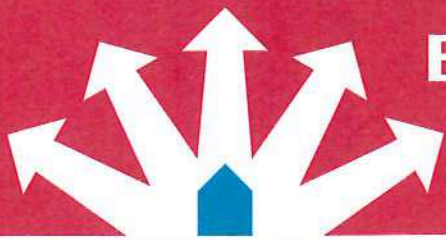
- Increased presence in Greater Minnesota -- The MATSH supportive housing referral tool will increase our statewide presence in 2014. Currently, 3% of the housing searches on our website happen in Greater Minnesota. As HousingLink's visibility increases, search activity and demand in Greater Minnesota will increase. HousingLink is also working on implementing a housing goal in the Olmstead plan that expands our service area to all of Minnesota for the housing search tool.
- Centralizing Project Based Section 8 & Section 8 Voucher Waiting Lists -- As funds are cut for administrating affordable housing programs, HousingLink will work to create efficiency by taking the waiting list demands off of properties and housing authorities, and managing it on their behalf.
- Helping renters overcome barriers to their housing search - We continually hear frustrations from renters with criminal backgrounds who have made changes in their lives, but still have trouble finding quality rental housing. In response, for the past year we have asked landlords listing vacancies about their willingness to work with renters who have barriers in their background. In evaluating our initial data, we see sufficient interest to warrant surveying our complete landlord database. The goal is to develop a subscription service where service agencies can more easily connect with these landlords. HousingLink is also in exploratory stages of creating a pilot focused on creating a risk pool program that may reimburse landlords who take chances on renting to applicants who wouldn't normally meet their screening criteria.
- Locational efficiency, access to transportation, location and supply of affordable housing, supportive housing -- These are priority areas for ongoing research and reporting efforts.

HousingLink continues to see the number of searches for housing on our website sky-rocket. We look forward to partnering with the Bloomington HRA in 2015. Together we can improve people's lives through information that helps them find an affordable home. Thank you for your generous, ongoing support.

Sincerely,



Sue Speakman-Gomez
President



EXPANDING our impact

623,085

Searches for
Affordable Housing

21,388

Affordable Vacancies
& Waiting List
Openings Listed

3 Million+

Page Views of
housing resources

New Projects. New Impact.

Olmstead Plan Housing Goal

The Olmstead Plan housing goal states, "People with disabilities will choose where they live, with whom, and in what type of housing." In 2014 we completed phase 1 of our work to achieve this goal. We engaged the community to identify improvements to our website.

In 2015 we are implementing these changes! Our website will have more information about individual rental units. It will also have more education about affordable rental housing options that meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

Fair Housing Videos in 4 languages

The Fair Housing Implementation Council contracted with **HousingLink to create Fair Housing awareness videos in 4 languages:** English, Hmong, Somali, and Spanish. Check them out at housinglink.org/housingresources/fairhousing

Twin Cities Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing

The Fair Housing Implementation Council also contracted with HousingLink to **conduct a regional analysis of impediments to Fair Housing.** See it at housinglink.org/Research/ResearchLinks

Project Based Section 8

Renters spend hours contacting Project Based Section 8 properties to get on multiple waiting lists. These lists often have a 12-24 month wait. We started to define an online resource to centralize these waiting lists. **It will make the process easier and more efficient for low-income renters and affordable housing providers.**

Electronic Data Feeds

Now management companies can post openings to HousingLink directly from their property management software. **This ensures more accurate and timely listings for renters searching HousingLink.**

Impact through Information

52,700

Visits for subsidized
housing information.

92,700

Views of Housing
Authority Waiting
List status.

68%

of Hennepin County
caseworkers who provide
direct service to clients say
HousingLink's services are
critical to their work.

4,400

Visits for
Fair Housing
Information.

4,677

listings that would
consider a Section 8
voucher in 2014.

1,408,000

Housing openings sent
through hAlert in 2014.

Housing Data Experts

- ➔ Streams – An inventory of housing with public funding in the Twin Cities
- ➔ Twin Cities Rental Revue - A quarterly report that tracks market rate rents
- ➔ Rent Reasonable Data for Housing Authorities
- ➔ Housing Research for Community Agencies
- ➔ MN Housing Measures (in partnership with the McKnight Foundation)
- ➔ Housing Counts (in partnership with Family Housing Fund)



Impact through Partnerships

HousingLink strategically partners with others to promote housing choice, stability and equity in Minnesota.

2014 Supporters

Bloomington HRA
Eide Bailly (In-Kind)
Fair Housing Implementation Council
Family Housing Fund
Google, Inc. (In-Kind)
Hennepin County
Hugh J. Andersen Foundation
Jay and Rose Phillips
Family Foundation of Minnesota
Live Smoke Free Minnesota
Many Individual Donors
McKnight Foundation
Metropolitan Council
Minnesota Homeownership Center
Minnesota Housing
Minnesota Multi Housing Association
Minneapolis Public Housing Authority
MN Department of Human Services:
Money Follows the Person
Redmon Law Chartered (In-Kind)
Scott County CDA
St. Paul Public Housing Agency
Target
Washington County HRA

Here are some partner projects we worked on:

MATSH (MN Access to Supportive Housing) - matsh.org

Fair Housing MN - Fairhousingmn.org

Hennepin County Lead Safe - housinglink.org/List/LeadSafe

Live Smoke Free MN - mnsmokefreehousing.org

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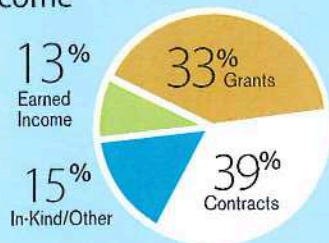
Amanda Novak – Vice President of Development, *CommonBond Communities*

Tonja Orr – Asst. Commissioner for Housing Policy, *Minnesota Housing*

Tracie Roberson – Homeless Services, *People Incorporated*

Financials

Income



Expenses



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Visit housinglink.org/annualreport to view our Form 990 and audited financials.